FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY
KERALA'S NO.1 IAS ACADEMY

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# FINDER

FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

## Why is the use of voter IDs for welfare schemes contentious?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy,

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

### Why in Focus?

- On November 3, **Union Panchayati Raj announced that voter cards with biometric authentication** will replace Aadhaar to identify beneficiaries and process payments under welfare schemes.

### Key Highlights:

- The **Minister argued that Aadhaar can be easily obtained**, potentially enabling fraudulent beneficiaries.
- **Voter IDs have so far served only as an entry document for other entitlements**, such as MGNREGA job cards, and not as the sole proof of welfare eligibility nationwide.
- The Opposition links the move to the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**, which removed over **13 crore electors**, **raising fears of exclusion from voting and welfare benefits**.
- The **West Bengal government** issued an order linking State-run welfare schemes, including **Public Distribution System** ration cards, to electoral rolls.
- In West Bengal, **22 lakh people appealed** against voter deletions, while **21 lakh appeals remain pending** before tribunals.
- The **Supreme Court described the EPIC (voter ID card) as a derivative document**, meaning it is issued because a person's name is already included in the electoral roll.
- **Citizens below 18 cannot vote but may qualify for welfare benefits**, so electoral rolls cannot serve as a universal beneficiary database.

### Implications:

- Exclusion from electoral rolls may **lead to double exclusion from voting and welfare benefits**.
- **Eligible citizens may lose welfare benefits** due to voter deletion.
- **Delayed appeals** leave affected people **without timely remedies**.
- **Unclear implementation creates uncertainty** among beneficiaries.

### Way Forward:

- **Retain Aadhaar as the primary identity** and payment link for welfare.
- **Use voter ID only as an additional document**, not as sole proof.

- **Ensure no eligible beneficiary is excluded** for lacking a voter ID.
- **Clearly define the schemes** covered under the proposal.

**Mains Question:**

Critically examine the proposal to use voter IDs with biometric authentication for welfare delivery in place of Aadhaar. (250 words, 15 marks)

# What are the changes to the Agnipath scheme?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Security challenges and their management in the country.

## Why in Focus?

- On **November 4**, the Government announced a revision to the **Agnipath scheme**, allowing Agniveers to serve for an additional **two years** before being considered for regular enrolment.

**Agnipath Scheme:** Launched in 2022, it is a four-year military recruitment scheme for youth aged 17.5–21 years (with a temporary upper-age relaxation to 23 years in 2022).

## Key Highlights:

- The **revised Agnipath scheme** retains the existing provision of **25% Agniveers joining the regular cadre after four years**.
- The remaining **75% of Agniveers**, who were earlier required to leave after four years, will now receive an **additional two-year engagement**, extending their service to six years.
- After six years, they will also be considered for **regular enrolment**, subject to their willingness and objective selection criteria.
- Those opting for the second engagement will receive **higher remuneration and an enhanced Seva Nidhi package**.

**Seva Nidhi:** It is a one-time lump-sum financial benefit paid to Agniveers upon completion of their service tenure.

- Agniveers selected after six years will be placed **one rank below** those retained after the initial four-year tenure.
- The revision follows a four-year assessment of Agniveers' **fitness, skills, discipline, motivation and operational contribution**, aiming to retain trained personnel and reduce repeated recruitment and training costs.

## Implications:

- Agniveers not selected at four years get a **longer path to a regular career**.
- The armed forces retain **trained and experienced personnel** instead of repeatedly training new recruits.
- **Lower rank** on regular enrolment may affect morale of those in the second engagement.
- Longer engagement raises the cost of **salaries and Seva Nidhi**.

## Way Forward:

- **Review the scheme periodically**, using the centralised performance database.
- Keep selection criteria **objective and transparent** for regular enrolment.
- Make clear the **rank and pay structure** to avoid disparity within batches.
- Support **skill development** so **Agniveers can also move into civilian careers**.

**Mains Question:**

Discuss the implications of the recent changes to the Agnipath scheme on the recruitment and retention strategy of the Indian Armed Forces. (250 Words, 15 marks)

# How supermarkets became targets of cyberattacks

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Cyber security challenges and their management.

## Why in Focus?

- **150 Intermarche stores** in France experienced cyberattacks affecting refrigeration systems in October.
- The attack pattern repeated in **Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, and Sweden**.

## Key Highlights:

- Cyberattacks targeted supermarket refrigeration systems, using the **forced defrost function** to raise temperatures to **50°C**, causing food spoilage.
- The attacks disrupted **food supply chains and retail operations**, highlighting the **vulnerability of critical commercial infrastructure to cyber threats**.

**Critical infrastructure:** Systems and assets so vital to a country that their incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health, or safety.

- The attacks exploited internet-connected **central controllers** that remotely manage refrigeration systems across supermarkets.
- Many controllers are **10–20 years old** and were designed for convenience and reliability rather than cybersecurity, making them vulnerable to attacks.
- The incident highlights the cybersecurity risks of **IoT infrastructure**, requiring regular **firmware updates** and firewall protection for connected controllers.

**Firmware:** Software embedded in a hardware device that controls its basic functions and enables it to operate.

**Firewall:**A network security system that separates a trusted internal network from untrusted external networks and controls incoming and outgoing network traffic based on predefined security rules to prevent unauthorised access.

- Strengthen **IoT cybersecurity** through regular firmware updates and firewall protection to prevent cyberattacks on critical infrastructure.

**Internet of Things (IoT) Infrastructure:** A network of internet-connected physical devices, such as sensors, machines and controllers, that collect and exchange data to monitor and control systems remotely.

## Implications:

- Cyberattacks can cause **financial losses, food wastage and operational disruptions** in the retail sector.
- **Outdated and insecure software in IoT devices** increases **vulnerability to cyberattacks**.
- Cyber threats to connected systems can disrupt **critical infrastructure and essential supply chains**.
- Disruption of food storage and distribution can affect **food security and public confidence**.

## Way Forward:

- **Update outdated firmware** and replace unsupported controllers to prevent cyberattacks.
- **Secure critical hardware by restricting public internet access** and enforcing **strong authentication** for remote access.
- Introduce **mandatory cybersecurity standards** for operational technology in the food retail sector.
- Strengthen **IoT security** through regular firmware updates and firewall protection.

**Mains Question:**

Examine the vulnerabilities in supermarket infrastructure that make them targets for cyberattacks and suggest measures to enhance their cybersecurity. (250 Words, 15 marks)

## KEYWORDS

### Directorate of Enforcement(ED)

- **Why in News?:** The **Karnataka High Court ruled that the ED cannot file a private complaint under PMLA** if the competent agency (e.g., CBI or State Police) **refuses to prosecute the scheduled offence**.
- The **Enforcement Directorate (Directorate of Enforcement)** was established in **1956** and renamed in 1957; it functions under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**.
- The ED primarily enforces three laws: **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002; Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999; and Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA), 2018**.
- It is also **the sponsoring agency under Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974**, so it investigates suspected violations of foreign exchange laws and **recommends preventive detention to the government**.
- Under the **PMLA**, the ED investigates **money laundering, traces proceeds of crime and has powers of search, seizure, arrest and provisional attachment of properties**.
- **The ED Director is appointed by the Central Government** on the recommendation of a high-level committee **comprising the Central Vigilance Commissioner**, **Vigilance Commissioners and Secretaries of the Ministries of Home, Personnel and Finance**.
- The Director has an initial tenure of **2 years**, extendable by **one year at a time up to a maximum of 5 years** in the public interest.

### Renewable Energy State Assessment Framework (RE-SAF)

- **Why in News?** Rajasthan received a **national award for outstanding performance under RE-SAF**, developed by **the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**.
- RE-SAF is developed by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** in collaboration with the **Power Finance Corporation (PFC)**.
- States are assessed on parameters such as **renewable energy development, policy and regulatory frameworks, grid readiness, DISCOM performance and investment-friendly environment**.
- Rajasthan plays an important role in achieving India's target of **500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based installed power capacity by 2030**.
- The State has an installed **renewable energy capacity of 51.6 GW**, including **45 GW of solar power capacity**.

### Ranivas Mound

- **Why in News?:** The Central Government declared **Ranivas Mound** in Kesariya, East Champaran, Bihar as the **Monument of National Importance**
- The site has been brought under the protection of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, taking the total number of ASI-protected monuments in Bihar to **70**.
- First excavated in **1861 by Alexander Cunningham**, the mound contains remains of an ancient **Buddhist monastery** and a large statue of **Lord Buddha**.
- Located near the famous **Kesariya Stupa**, the site highlights Bihar's rich Buddhist archaeological heritage.
- The declaration was made under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958**; the site covers **1.63 acres** and is owned by the Bihar Government.

### Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)

- **Why in News?** ART has **helped Manipur's Imphal West and Pherzawl districts** achieve the **'Surakshit' (safe)**

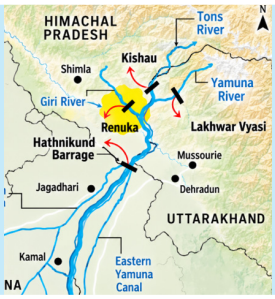
**status** by improving HIV treatment coverage and viral suppression.

- **ART** is a combination of medicines used to control **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** infection by suppressing viral replication.
- **HIV is a virus that destroys CD4 cells** (also called helper T-cells), an important part of your immune system
- ART reduces the **viral load** in the body, strengthens the immune system and prevents progression to **Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)**.
- It **does not completely cure HIV** but **helps people living with HIV lead longer and healthier lives**.
- **Effective ART can reduce viral load to an undetectable level**, preventing sexual transmission of HIV

## Places in News

### Kishau Dam Project

- **Why in News?:** The **eight-year deadlock over the Kishau Dam Project ended** after the Centre and beneficiary States agreed to share its ₹2,000 crore power component cost.
- The project is a **proposed multipurpose dam on the Tons River**, a major tributary of the **Yamuna**, along the Uttarakhand–Himachal Pradesh border.
- It envisages a **concrete gravity dam** with a proposed hydropower capacity of **660 MW**.
- The project aims to create irrigation potential of around **97,000 hectares**, **supply water to beneficiary States and improve the flow of the Yamuna**
- The six beneficiary States are **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi**
- The Centre will bear **90% of the water component cost**, while the States will share the remaining 10%.




### Nyoma Airbase (Mudh-Nyoma Airbase)

- **Why in News?:** The Indian Air Force's **IL-76MD heavy-lift aircraft** landed at Nyoma Airbase, setting a **record for the highest-altitude landing by this aircraft type**.
- Located in **eastern Ladakh**, Nyoma lies at an altitude of approximately **13,700 feet** and close to the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** with China.
- The airbase is situated on the banks of the **Indus River**, around 180 km south-east of Leh.
- Developed by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**, it has a **2.7-km-long paved runway** capable of supporting fighter jets, transport aircraft and helicopters.
- Operationalised in **November 2025**, it strengthens India's military logistics, rapid troop deployment and operational capabilities along the China border.




## Species In News

### Cellophane Bee (Colletes inaequalis)

- **Why in News?** A study published in the **Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)** found that cellophane bees **produce a natural plastic-like material that is biodegradable**.

- Cellophane bees are **solitary, ground-nesting bees** commonly found in North America.
- They belong to the family **Colletidae** and are known for **lining their underground nest cells with a waterproof, cellophane-like secretion**.
- The secretion is **produced by specialised glands** and consists mainly of **polyester-like compounds**, which protect developing larvae from moisture and microbes.
- Unlike conventional petroleum-based plastics, this natural polymer is **biodegradable**, **offering insights for developing environmentally friendly materials**.

